

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Rear Admiral Gregory Smith, Director of Communications, Deputy Spokesman,
Multi-National Corps – Iraq**

**Major General Alessandro Pompegnani, Deputy Commander, NATO Training
Commission in Iraq**

DATE:

DECEMBER 9, 2007

TRANSCRIBED BY:

SOS INTERNATIONAL, LTD.

PARTICIPANTS:

REAR ADMIRAL GREG SMITH

MAJOR GENERAL ALESSANDRO POMPEGNANI

REPORTERS:

JONATHON BLAKELY FROM NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

REPORTERS 1-6

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

RDML SMITH: Good afternoon. As-Salāmu `Alaykum. I'm joined today by Major General Alessandro Pompegnani, Deputy Commander of the NATO Training Commission here in Iraq. Following a brief operational update, General Pompegnani will address NATO's mission and its training of various security forces here in Iraq. We will then be open for your questions. As the fight continues against al-Qaida and other criminals and insurgents across Iraq, we are seeing today steady progress in operations, along with active participation of Iraqis determined to see their country recover from four-plus years of war and bloodshed. In two separate operations this past Thursday near Bilad, Iraqi security forces, advised by US Special Forces, killed a senior al-Qaida in Iraq leader and captured 55 other insurgents. The killed al-Qaida leader was among eight other captured suspected terrorists. They were found with numerous 82-mm mortar rounds, several assault rifles, loaded magazines, hand grenades and body armor. Among the eight detained was a known al-Qaida in Iraq terrorist cell leader who was reported to have conducted indirect fire attacks against coalition bases in the area. This terrorist is also suspected to have been involved in improvised explosive device cell operations and other attacks against coalition and security forces and innocent Iraqi civilians. In the second operation, Iraqi security forces, advised by US Special Forces, detained 47 additional suspects for questioning during a cordon and search area of the al-Sawad village. Iraqi forces conducted the operations to disrupt al-Qaida in Iraq's cells, safe houses, and weapons

storage areas in the vicinity. All the detainees are currently in the custody of the Iraqi police. On Wednesday, in an operation in Mosul, coalition forces successfully interdicted an improvised explosive device and placement cell as they attempted to bury an IED in a road. This video shows what happened. On Tuesday evening in Mosul, an unmanned aerial vehicle spotted five suspicious individuals along a road outside the city. You will notice the five individuals in the middle of the road in the process of digging a hole, preparing to bury an improvised explosive device. The operator of the unmanned aerial vehicle called in the location of the individuals to an army scout weapons team consisting of two helicopters operating nearby. The crew insured the area was clear of innocent civilians, and fired a single Hellfire missile at the insurgents, hitting the intended target, killing four of the five individuals. The fifth man, you see running away here, was tracked by aerial surveillance and was later captured. Shortly after the missile was fired, the scout weapons team observed a car arrive at the scene and several individuals loaded the four bodies into the vehicle. The helicopters tracked this vehicle and guided ground forces to that location, where other suspected insurgents were detained. Surveillance and communication capabilities such as these, along with support from Iraqi security forces and citizens, have contributed to a higher found and cleared rate for improvised explosive devices. We've also seen a fifteen percent drop in improvised explosive device attacks between October and November. However, the level of

attacks overall remains high as terrorists and criminals continue to target security forces and innocent Iraqi civilians. On Friday, we witnessed another horrific example of al-Qaida in Iraq's disregard for human life and growing desperation as al-Qaida attempts to reconstitute in areas where they have been weakened during the surge. This time, a female suicide bomber targeted members of the Awakening Council in al-Muqadiyah. The explosion, regrettably, killed twelve innocent concerned local citizens. As concerned local citizens take a stand against extremists and criminals, they are often the first line of defense, and, in some cases, become targets of al-Qaida's ruthless intimidation. However, brave Iraqi citizens continue to step forward to assist in securing their neighborhoods and uniting in their untired efforts to help defeat this al-Qaida and other militant groups. In MND-Center's area of operations, a total of 94 caches were found during the month of November. Forty of these caches were found by or with the assistance of concerned local citizens. They either led security forces to the site of the cache or brought the material to police or army security outposts. Removing these caches has resulted in reduced levels of violence in the area, reduced enemy attacks, and, more importantly, fewer casualties. In Arab Jabour, the combined efforts of coalition forces and a concerned local citizen group succeeded in clearing an insurgent stronghold that had been booby trapped as a house-borne explosive improvised attack...area...device itself...the house was. It all began last Sunday, as a CLC group led by Selah

Mubarak conducted a daylight search of an abandoned building in the neighborhood they were patrolling, which had been the source of several attacks in the past few weeks. Tired of the violence, local residents, including Mubarak's cousin who owned the building, took proactive measures to stop the attacks. The citizens went to the building to gather intelligence. The citizens were aware that the enemy's tactic of booby-trapping the structures, and found a pressure-plate improvised explosive device on the second floor roof entrance. They observed a wire leading from the initiator of that device to an overstuffed chair located near the door. Packed inside the chair were approximately 50 pounds of an unknown explosive, which could have injured or killed scores had it exploded. Coalition forces evacuated the surrounding area and destroyed the building. These concerned local citizens have proven invaluable to security forces as a source of local intelligence. The cooperation between the local citizens and security forces has led to improved security and greater stability in the area of Arab Jabour. The goal of the concerned local citizen program is to increase the capacity of Iraqi and coalition forces to improve security in areas still threatened by al-Qaida and other militant groups. All of the CLCs are either under the control of Iraqi security forces or coalition security forces. The CLC program has been one of the key contributing factors to the 60% decrease in terrorist attacks witnessed since June 2007, which was when the surge of operations began. Currently, there are approximately 72,000 active concerned local

citizens across Iraq, nearly 295 different groups of individuals. This includes 60,000 Iraqis on contract, which are being paid a monthly wage, and another 12,000 serving as CLC volunteers. Approximately 25% of these individuals are requesting to serve as permanent members of the Iraqi security force, both police and army. In the last six months, almost 1,800 CLC members have gone through the requisite training, and are now full-fledged members of the Iraqi security forces. However, it is important to note that over 10,000 Iraqis from the original Anbar Awakening were hired, and now serve as Iraqi security forces. Though these sons of Anbar were hired before we started actively tracking the number of CLC volunteers in the concerned local citizen program, they serve as a blueprint for the way ahead for other volunteers who want to serve and defend their country. The transformed environment of Anbar province is another great example of how partnering with the citizens can reduce violence and secure neighborhoods. This week, the Government of Iraq issued orders to hire an additional 2,000 Iraqis into the police, of which 1,225 will be selected from the concerned local citizen program. These new police officers will serve in south and west Baghdad, as well as Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad. As these individuals transition into security forces, many of them will receive training facilitated by the NATO training mission. NATO plays an important role in providing much needed expertise and training to the growing branches of security forces here in Iraq. Major General Pompegnani, the Deputy Commander of the NATO

mission is here today to discuss more in depth of NATO's role here in Iraq. General.

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: Thank you Admiral Smith. Good afternoon ladies and gentleman. My name is Alessandro Pompegnani, Deputy Commander of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq. I'm from the Italian army. This is my second tour in Iraq, just to tell you. NATO Training Mission - Iraq is at a critical point in which our mission is transitioning more into one of an advisory and coaching arrangement for the Iraqi institutions we were—prior to this critical stage—training and giving close support mentoring to. I'll give you a bit of our history here. NATO Training Mission was established August 2004, exactly the 14th of August 2004, at the request of the interim Iraqi Government to provide distinct training and technical assistance for the Iraqi Security Forces. Our focus is to train, advise, and mentor Iraqi leadership at the strategic and operational levels, establishing enduring Iraqi military and government structures. The NTM-I, NATO Training Mission-Iraq, NTM-I, is now primarily an advising force supporting Iraqi-led institutional programs. Our recent successes have come from programs in which the Iraqi trainees have become the trainers. Another indicator of accomplishment is when NATO Training Mission assistance is replaced with Iraqi-ownership. The NTM-I met such milestones when two educational institutions, the Joint Staff College and the Iraqi Military

Academy, became fully operationally capable in July...last July. Under the National Defense University Joint Staff College has an Iraqi-run Junior Staff course. There are 64 majors and captains attending this course. The Joint Staff College is a year-long course that prepares officers to manage and solve tactical and operational level problems, and the course teaches war fighting strategy. National Defense College is running the second course with 19 attendees representing all the Iraqi government ministries. The Defense Language Institute Course will have Iraqi instructors teaching the course in February. The "Train-the-Trainer" course was run by a training team of six United Kingdom officers who had taught the course from October to December. The Navy non-commissioned officer...The Navy NCO leadership course is a stellar example of what has become a means for the Iraqi navy to train the NCO corps to lead in their developing maritime military branch. The course began in September, and NTM-I has a training and advising team that facilitated three courses, with the last one wrapping up November, the 30 of November. The leader of the training recently announced that the course is fully owned by the Iraqi navy and operationally capable. The course covers 35 blocks of leadership methods, theory, and practice. NTM-I is actively engaged in improving the skills of Iraqi instructors as well. We sent a U.K. team of six instructors to Zahko to assist 42 instructors from the four Iraqi military academies in improving their teaching skills. We are seeing programs we were instrumental in

developing and executing being handed over and declared fully operationally capable in the hands of our Iraqi colleagues. While some of the NTM-I's projects are moving on to the final mentoring stage, NTM-I is taking on new duties in response to the Iraqi authorities' requests. The newest training initiative by NTM-I is the Gendarmerie-type training for the Iraqi National Police that started in October. The Italian Carabinieri training at Camp Dublin is led by a team of 41 Carabinieri members. Carabinieri training is being taught here as a result of a 2006 request from the Prime Minister of Iraq for NATO's assistance. Having seen how NTM-I had helped build up training institutions for the Iraqi Armed Forces, he requested that this be expanded to include training for the Iraqi National Police. This is NATO's response to that request. This training provides an important opportunity for the National Police to modernize and streamline their leadership standard. NTM-I has experienced success in helping build up Iraqi forces leadership, and has a motivated team in place to provide core police training for the Iraqi National Police. NTM-I is committed to supporting this training into its full capability. In conclusion, I am indeed optimistic about the progresses we have made, and NTM-I is improving relationships and working with our Iraqi counterparts to implement their solutions for sustainable institutional stability. Thank you for your attention. That's all I have for this afternoon, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

REP1: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from al-Arabiyah newspaper. First question is to Admiral Smith. In the recent report by the American intelligence agency, this gave a chance to Iran to have more connection with the international world about the nuclear weapon. Is this due to less interference with Iraq? And the second question is to NATO mission. The Ministry of Interior issued a report recently of not admitting any volunteers in 2008. And this is due to making new statistics or providing a new kind of training. So why is this happening?

RDML SMITH: I think it'd be helpful if you'd get the first question restated please.

UNK: Sir, the first question is that Iran have been sanctioned by most of the countries and it have been secluded from all the countries dealing with Iran. Is this due to Iran interference in Baghdad?

RDML SMITH: As I understand your question, the sanctions were specific to its nuclear programs and also its support of terrorist activities outside Iran, principally by the Quds force, which was named specifically as a group inside Iran responsible for activity. We have stated publicly and often Iran has had a role here in Iraq that we believe has been not constructive in the past. They have said in recent months that they intend to participate in a supportive and constructive way in Iraq. We look forward to that coming to fruition. We are certainly waiting to see that happen on the battlefield as we continue today to find Iranian-made weapons and also members of Iraq who have gone to Iran to be trained still amongst

the insurgents we're picking up on the battlefield. So we're in a wait and see mode as far as their activity vis-à-vis Iraq. But I think the answer to your question there are multiple reasons why they were listed as sanctioned, both their activities and associated work with nuclear weapons and as well with insurgent activity here in Iraq.

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: Could you summarize the question please?

UNK: Second question, General, was about the Interior Ministry ordered all the people who are coming to apply for the police academy in 2008 not to come and to apply, because they are reshuffling and recalculating the people who are already applying in 2007, and they want to look into their forms, into their applications. What do you have to say about that?

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: You have to move this question to the Minister of the Interior. I'm not entitled to answer. I can tell you that the Carabinieri training for the Iraqi National Police has been explicitly requested by the Prime Minister. And we are here because we are responding to this request. But for other business related to the Minister of Interior to go directly to him.

REP1: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Concerning year 2008, if the training stopped, are you going to withdraw, or do you have any other training programs?

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: Our program is exactly the program that the Prime

Minister request us. Just to summarize you what is this program. We have to train eight courses for creating the foundation of the Iraqi National Police. We just started with the first one. The first one is going to be over more or less at the end of December. Exactly the ceremony of graduation should be if confirmed the 18th of December. Afterward, we have to run other seven courses the same way. And this is our program. We don't know anything else, and our intention, our intent is to complete our mission.

REP2: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from al-Sabah newspaper. Question to Admiral Smith. Regarding the improvement of the security situation in all of Iraq, it's true that the security has been improved, particularly in Baghdad. But places in Diyala for instance, there are still, we are still witnessing some operations there. Or there has been a lot of operations, also like Arrowhead River. So, after the operations, we still get to see that the citizens, or the people, say that the terrorists go back again to those places after the end of the operations, because some of the armed groups also returned and attacked some villages. So, why don't you stay in those places after the end of the operations, so that you will prevent the terrorists from coming back again? The second question is to Major Pompegnani... General Pompegnani. When do you think the Iraqi Security Forces will be ready, or the Iraqi police will be ready to take over the security situation by themselves in Iraq?

RDML SMITH: Thank you. To your first question, we have said for quite some time now that al-Qaida was continuing to operate, especially in the Diyala River Valley region and north up from Baghdad to Mosul as their primary focus areas. We've had operations, as you pointed out, ongoing since the middle of November with great success, I might add, against al-Qaida insurgents. True, they are still capable of causing bloodshed, conducting attacks. We realize that. Our operations are not ended by any measure. In fact, they continue at the same pace they have since we began operations in June. The enemy has dispersed well away from the cities into the countryside. We believe that they're clearly on the run. They're beginning to operate in areas that they have traditionally had not had sanctuary. And so, they're forming new alliances if they're able to in certain areas. But we are also working very hard to break down those alliances and sustain our operations in Diyala and elsewhere. So I think you'll see in the coming weeks reporting from here as I reported today of some success here, of wrapping up large numbers of al-Qaida as evidence that we continue conduct our operations very effectively. And with the support of the Iraq people and the concerned local citizens, we believe there will be a secure and stable Diyala in the months to come.

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: What I believe about that is that the key words on the Iraqi National Police is just "national." National in this sense in this case means to create a new mindset, a new mentality. What we try to do is to give them a new sense of belonging to a new assets valuable for the

entire new country. What I believe, also, is that the programs that we establish is being agreed with the highest authorities, the Iraqi authorities, and agreed also with the commander of the Iraqi National Police. In other words, we provide them with the program and then together try to accommodate to our range exactly for the specific needs of the new Iraqi National Police. The entire program, as I said before, will last a couple years, more or less. You have to consider eight weeks for each course. The courses are eight, and so we are going very close to a couple of years, at the end of which all the trained groups of the Iraqi National Police will be in the condition to train the other people. So, the optimism on these results are stigmatized by just these facts. First of all, we are being requested. Secondly, what I've seen so far is the attendees are very well motivated to learn and to understand that the Iraqi National Police means something different compared with the past. And thirdly, the capacity that we are giving throughout the Carabinieri professionalism authorized to think that at the end they would be able to manage everything. But don't ask me when, because when is something that I can't tell you.

REP3: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from al-Samariyah TV. I'd like to know the mechanism of your watching the armed forces, the armed troops, and how they implant the IEDs. How can you monitor the car bombs? And is there any kind of solution to avoid the car bombs, just like we monitored the IED

implanters?

RDML SMITH: The most effective way to stop all bombings in Iraq, whether it's improvised explosive devices planted in the ground or car bombs, is to go after the network that generates the capacity to do that: the financing, the material support, the training, some of the engineering that goes into that. You've got to get, as we say, "ahead of the blast." You have to go after the network that really facilitates the actual employment of these weapons. Once the device is driven into a block, a square block, or a neighborhood, it's very difficult to stop. Once a suicide vest and a person walks into a crowded area, it's very hard to stop. If they've already covered up the bomb in a road and they've gone away, and they're waiting for next vehicle to come up, very hard to detect and stop. Although our found-and-cleared rate for improvised explosive devices are now greater than 50%, which is a good sign. Our real work is to go after the network that leads into that. So, what we've had success with on the car bombs, in particular, is finding out the financing and the supplying, the engineering, and the location of these car bomb factories that are really in the belts around Baghdad principally. Many of those have been taken down. Clearly, al-Qaida and others are trying to regenerate some of that. But that's why you've seen the reduction that you've seen so far. There will never be any technology. There will never be any means that will completely erase the probability or the likelihood of a car bomb going off, but we've made great strides in the last few

years, and I think you've seen some of that progress today.

REP3: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Admiral Smith, you've talked about bombing the armed groups while they were actually implanting the IEDs. Is there a way to target the car bombs in the same method and the same mechanism?

RDML SMITH: While, again from an aerial...this case what you saw was an unmanned aerial vehicle operated by a control person, in many cases not even here in Iraq, on a television screen flying over an area observing what they see, something suspicious. This was 6:00 pm at night. It was dark. You saw the white figures that showed up. Those were obviously the individuals. We can determine by their activity what's sort of going on on the ground, and make some judgments about that. In the case of a car bomb—often built inside of a building, driven outside that building and driven down the road and parked somewhere, or driven in and blown up—very much a different situation. There's no outward signs, typically, as a car is driving down the road or that vehicle's driving down the road that it is, in fact, a bomb. There are other technologies, scanners and systems that can be put at checkpoints that can detect explosive materials. In fact, that's where we're making from a technology point of view some of the bigger leaps. But it causes checkpoints, meaning obviously, vehicles have to be slowed down, go through purposely through checkpoints, scanned by this machine to determine whether explosive

devices are in that vehicle. That's effective. But from an aerial point of view like you've seen for the IEDs much more difficult to do. And yet we're using other technologies to overcome that.

REP4: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from [unintelligible] Iraq agency. Question to Admiral Smith. A week ago, we witnessed a new phenomenon in Diyala. We have female suicide bombers. So how would you describe this? The second question. We have news reports saying that the Awakenings are being threatened in the southwest of Baghdad. Is that true?

RDML SMITH: The use of women as suicide bombers is not new to Iraq. It's not new to the world. It's unfortunate that al-Qaida, in this particular instance, or other militant groups would employ women to conduct their vengeance against Iraqis in this case. A very tragic event. But the difference here, I think, is culturally, women can approach areas, perhaps more undetected than males might be allowed to do. We've seen that in the past. We've also seen some very observant control measures being put in place by various astute, in this case, police or concerned local citizens who recognize a woman approaching, asking her to stop, searching that woman, and finding an explosive vest. In this case, she was able to enter inside of a structure, as I understand it, and explode that device, killing several, as you point out. So, the concern is, I think, that there still resides individuals who, through ideology, believe this is a path

towards some sort of a righteous act, and clearly it's not. It's killing innocent civilians who are here to protect other Iraqis. And that kind of vengeance—that kind of hatred—is hard for me to understand. I suspect it's hard for you to understand. And it's hard to know, since she's no longer with us, what her true motive was. But it clearly is a desperate act. And your second question?

REP4: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: There are some reports saying that the Awakening groups are being threatened in the south of Baghdad.

RDML SMITH: That's true. Awakening groups, I think, are becoming assembled, if you will, of what Iraq is beginning to find its foundations and its people. It's finding the strength of Iraq in the average citizen who believes that the future of Iraq must be built on a foundation of peace, a foundation of accommodation, a foundation of reconciliation, and that's what the CLC groups, I think, represent. So, that's a threat to al-Qaida. It's a threat to other militants who do not want to see Iraq accommodate, do not want to see Iraq be peaceful and stable, or to reconcile. And that's why I think they're the targets.

BLAKELY: Jonathan Blakely of National Public Radio. Two questions, one's for General Pompegnani. Is there a certain number of trained police you're aiming for at the end of the eight courses? And if you could just talk a bit about, "What is success?" When you're done, what will you call

success? And then for Admiral Smith, with the CLC threats, to them, clearly, the CLCs are dramatically important to the future of stability here. If they're being threatened, now what?

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: Yes, at the end of each courses, we are leaving, of course, part of the trainees became trainers for the rest of course. Because we have to consider that each...we can consider 450 students or attendees as a part of the unit where they are belong to. At the end, they are coming back to the unit they are able to transmit, transfer as much as properly as possible the training that they received. "Why I'm optimistic?" you say, in other words. Because I had the chance to go very often to Camp Dublin to assist this first course that we are attending. And I can tell you that all the students, all the trainees, are very well motivated. As you can imagine, the course is divided into theoretical instructions, but also practical ones, on the ground of course. But talking, for example, of the theoretical, when you are sitting, as we are now, in a classroom, I've seen many of them take notes, which means to be very willing to learn, to get as much as possible from the proficiency of the trainers. Of course, they are students that show the intention to learn, and the intention to reverse everything to others is the first course. But I'm confident that also the second, the third, until the eighth, until the last, it will be the same.

BLAKELY: Is there a benchmark number you're looking for once you're done with the eight courses?

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: The total number training. The total number training if the numbers will be confirmed by the single units, are around 450 each. Because 450 each is related to the physical possibility to receive, to accommodate the people. But another, just to add another point. Another reason to be optimist is that for the first time—considering all the training that we provide as a NATO training mission, not only for the National Police, but also for the others that I mentioned at the very beginning—this was the first time that the limit number 450 was overcome. They came more than. And we needed to send back the remaining. If I remember right, there are 17 more than the limited space. Of course, they will attend the next one. But just to tell you for the first time, we received more than we expected.

RDML SMITH: And to your second question, I think we've seen since the very beginning of the Anbar Awakening that those individuals stood up first and put their lives on the line, in fact, gave a lot of their privacy away. They became very public figures in their local villages and became the targets. So, what we've seen, I think, is a resolve of individuals to recognize that that was going to be part of the risk of being part of a CLC. And as individuals were attacked, as groups were attacked, it's my sense that that further emboldened those individuals to continue their mission as they saw it. It has not taken away from the volunteerism. We continue to see groups again form, nearly 300 groups as of today. So, if anything, I think, it works against the insurgents to attack the innocent CLC groups

is my sense. And certainly it has not done anything to dampen the enthusiasm of these neighborhood watch groups.

REP5: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from al-Sharq newspaper. Question to General Pompegnani. Through your advisory role, have you given any advice or report to the Iraqi Government or the Minister of Interior about the allegiance of some of the members who actually belong to some party? Have you considered this? Have you considered giving any...

UNK: General Pompegnani, the question was, since you are the Deputy Commander of NATO and also working as an advisor, did you present the Iraqi side with any advice concerning the training of the police, and to the...?

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: I got it, thank you. I have to tell you that when I arrived here, the first act that I did was introduce myself to the highest authorities of the Iraqi countries, including of course the Minister of Interior. And specifically for the programs of the Iraqi National Police, we have been requested to establish and to provide a program for doing this job as proper as possible. But after our personal views on what was necessary to do, we presented the draft, if you say if you want, of this program to the Prime Minister, to the Minister of Interior, to the Commander of the Iraqi National Police to receive their own blessing before starting. And, of course, we arrange step-by-step the current

programs with the entire consensus of these local authorities. And, in this sense our presence there, which is a periodical one, is a way to give our advice, of course, but also to receive their own advice. Because the final goal should be absolutely combined and agreed. I don't know if this answers your questions.

UNK: There is a second part as a follow on to this question, sir. As being an advisor to the Prime Minister and to the Interior Minister advising them on the police issues, did you advise them about the infiltration of rogue elements or different elements into the police station and into the police force?

MAG GEN POMPEGNANI: No, this is not our method, of course. We cannot go into the proper of the Minister of the Interior. We know, because we have been informed about the possibility that this exists. But we have to assume that because we are being requested, the people that we receive for being trained should have been selected somehow from the local authorities. Of course, we have a chance to understand if everybody's entitled to attend the courses throughout other means, which are, just to mention one, the reliability, the loyalty in terms of training, the proficiency in the willing to be trained. But for the rest of course, is a matter of the Minister of the Interior.

REP6: Question from al-Hurriyah TV. In a statement to al-Qaida, posted on the Internet, said that they will start killing the leaders of the Awakening,

chiefs or leaders. Do you think that the security improvement right now is to why it's happening? And the second question is, how would you evaluate the work of the Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq? The second question is for General Pompegnani.

RDML SMITH: Obviously, we think that al-Qaida feels threatened by not only the professionalism of the Iraqi Security Forces and the development and capacity there to deal with those threats. Clearly they felt threatened by the surge. The increase of forces in Baghdad have driven many of them out of Baghdad and out of major cities in Iraq. But I also believe they feel threatened by the existence of individuals now who have risen up as citizens to form these concerned local citizen groups. So, yes, I think the answer to your question, they do feel threatened. And that's why CLCs and other forms of security, whether it's Iraqi police at checkpoints or Iraqi army or coalition forces, will always be the target of al-Qaida, because that's the primary threat to their existence. And the intimidation they use, typically against civilians, to form alliances against those security forces, and that's the reason they blow up innocent civilians and they intimidate and kidnap, and such. But yes, concerned local citizens are very much a threat to the security that al-Qaida hopes to portray here in the country.

MAJ GEN POMPEGNANI: For my part, it's too soon to evaluate or assess the job of the Iraqi National Police. For the moment, what we can say is that the training started very well, and there are all the indications, all the

indicators who can give us the chance to be positive in the result. But it's too soon to evaluate.

RDML SMITH: One last question if we have one. I want to thank you for your time this afternoon. And we've got a couple more events this week. I look forward to seeing you.